

# Jan Watson

## Happily Married

### SAMUEL CLEMENS

Jan Watson was a familiar face on television, but she is perhaps best known for her roles in *The Silencers* (1966), *Murderers' Row* (1966), and *The Ambushers* (1967) starring Dean Martin as Matt Helm. She began her career in Hollywood after being crowned Miss California, USA in 1962. She was recruited by 20th Century-Fox and Columbia Pictures while appearing in commercials and posing in various magazines. She retired early after marrying and dedicated her life to her family, while still keeping in touch with her co-stars. Jan Watson lives happily with her husband Seymour Winston in Los Angeles. She and I had a one-on-one where she discussed some memorable events in her career.

**Samuel Clemens:** When did you first realize that you wanted to be an actress?

**Jan Watson:** In 1959, while finishing high school, I won a pageant—which I didn't expect. I took a course in religious studies at UCLA, and I was later crowned Miss Hollywood, USA. That's when I was given a modeling contract and did commercials.

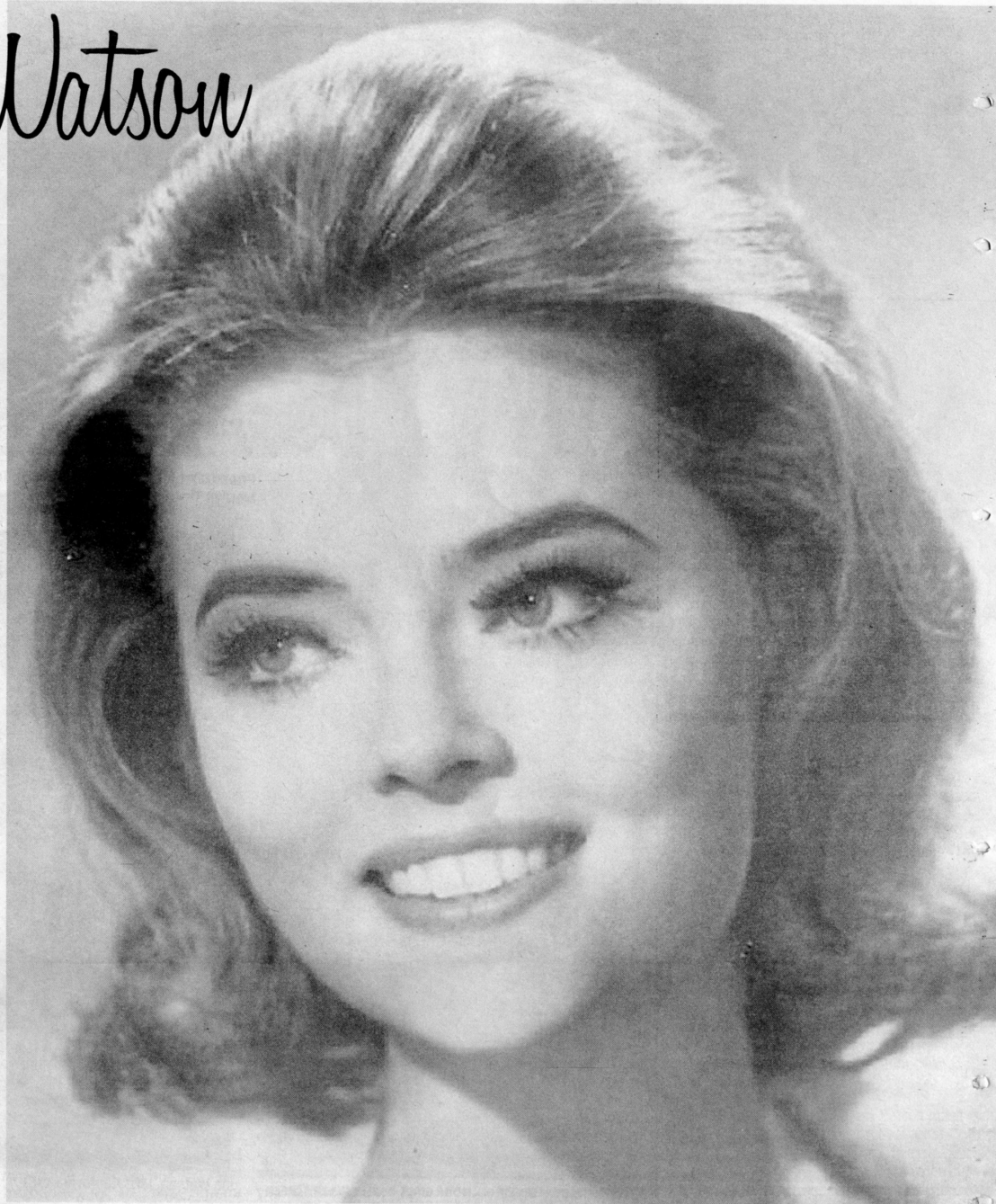
**SC:** Where did you study acting? Was there a particular moment when you were discovered?

**Jan Watson:** After I was crowned Miss California, USA, 20th Century-Fox offered me acting lessons. An interesting story is that I was runner-up in Miss California, but I was crowned the winner after Pamela Stettler got married.

**SC:** Was there anyone in particular who had a profound impact on your career?

**Jan Watson:** My mother was influential in my career. She modeled for John Robert Powers in her youth, so she was supportive. She taught me how to pose.

**SC:** Dean Martin's *The Silencers*,





COURTESY OF GLAMOUR GIRLS OF THE SILVER SCREEN



Promo shot for *The Silencers* (1966). Top: Mary Jane Mangler, Inga Neilsen, Marilyn Tindall. Bottom: Barbara Burgess, Pamela Rodgers, and Jan Watson.



Jan Watson, Miss California 1961





Not so fast, Dean! In this *Ambushers* publicity still, a clowning Dean Martin pretends that a low-speed scooter ride with Jan means he has to hold on for dear life.



*Murderers' Row*, and *The Ambushers* are among your most popular films. How did you get the recurring role of a Slaygirl? What was it like working alongside Dean Martin?

**Jan Watson:** I auditioned for it while Columbia Pictures was considering me for a long-term

contract. I was paid a generous salary of \$250 a week, which was more than a lot of the contractees. Beverly Adams had a larger role, but she was paid less than that. Dean was a wonderful man, and he was so professional. He even introduced me to Frank Sinatra between rehearsals. That role gave



*The Ambushers* (1967): left to right: Alena Johnston, Dean Martin, Susannah Moore, Penny Brahms and Jan Watson.

me confidence in myself. I began to recognize my own self-worth.

**SC:** Was there anyone in Hollywood who you didn't like? Who did you admire the most?

**Jan Watson:** There was only one

person who I couldn't stand being near. I was at a dinner party and I was seated by Ricardo Montalban. He was the most self-indulgent person I've ever met. Otherwise, everyone else was wonderful. I ad-

mired Harrison Ford a great deal. He was a contract player at Columbia Pictures earning a meager \$150 a week. The studio didn't renew his contract, which was a mistake on their part. He became a huge suc-



On the 1967 *Batman* episode "A Piece of the Action," Angelique Pettyjohn and Jan Watson, seen here with Bruce Wayne (Adam West), play models.

cess.

SC: What was your favorite on-screen role?

**Jan Watson:** I was on an episode of *I Dream of Jeannie* titled "My Master, the Swinging Bachelor." It was the most supportive, comfortable, and welcoming environment I've ever worked in. Barbara [Eden] was kind, Larry Hagman was a good man, and the crew was so professional. It was probably my most widely-seen part, too, considering the cult status that series has achieved.

SC: Were there any roles that you were offered but didn't accept? Did you have any regrets about it?

**Jan Watson:** I was offered the starring role in *The Avengers*, which began airing in 1961. I turned it down. I have no regrets about it, though, because I wouldn't have gotten cast in *The Silencers*, and I wouldn't have met my husband as a result.

SC: Why did you leave Hollywood?

**Jan Watson:** While rehearsing for *The Silencers*, I met my future husband, Henry Levin. He be-



(left to right): Margaret Teele, Barbara Burgess, Jan Watson, Marilyn Tindall, Margie Nelson, and Mary Jane Mangler do publicity for *The Silencers*.

came the love of my life. After we married, I just wanted to be a wife and mother. We left for Rome and spent a year there. When I returned to Los Angeles, I appeared in an episode of *Barnaby Jones*. I didn't

really audition for anything else afterwards, and I didn't need to. I looked at acting as a career. I got a paycheck and I was able to support myself. I had no ambitions to win an Academy Award.



Jan Watson and Arlene Charles as bordello girls in *Alvarez Kelly* (1966).



children, so I am content.

SC: What are you doing these days?

**Jan Watson:** I am assisting the FBI with an investigation. I was told by a Medical Center years ago that I had cancer. I was given a hysterectomy, but it turned out that I didn't have cancer. The medical doctor fled to Germany shortly afterwards. This happens more often than it should in order to expand Medicare, which is fraud. There are elements of elder abuse and identity theft in this as well. Once the investigation concludes, I think that it will be a huge story that will benefit a lot of the victims of fraud.

SC: What advice would you give to aspiring actresses?

**Jan Watson:** I would tell them to enjoy themselves. When you audition, you should be calm, friendly, and personable. When you meet a director, you should speak to them like you're their friend.

SC: Would you ever consider re-turning to acting?

**Jan Watson:** No. I am almost 80 years old. There aren't a lot of roles for women of my age unless they are character parts. I am happily married with children and grand-